

JAY - SORRY I WAS LATE

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Feature Article

This is interesting - holds your attention. But sometimes hard to follow. What does he do now? His obvious still involved with the church, but how?  
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Climbing to the top level of the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum, 26-year-old, ex-seminarian, Thomas Griffith of Costa Mesa kept a watchful eye on the progress of the 78-year-old Roman Catholic priest that he was assigned to escort to Level C, Section 12. As they started to climb yet another set of stairs, the old man complained. — and?

Don't start a sentence with numerals.  
103,000 worshippers had come to the Coliseum on this hot September 15th evening to participate in the Mass with Pope John Paul II, and it was ~~Tom's~~ <sup>GRIFFITH'S</sup> responsibility, as communion was being distributed throughout the arena, that the ~~septuagenarian~~ <sup>80-year-old</sup> cleric under his care reach their <sup>PLURAL</sup> station and that the people reach the priest.

The amazing display of harmony and rich cultural diversity was not lost to ~~Tom~~ <sup>on Griffith</sup>. He knew that it was more than a tiring number of Coliseum stairs that had brought him to this place of awe and hope and frustration.

~~Griffith's~~  
Tom had originally considered protesting against the Pope's policies with regards to the role of women and the priesthood during the Pope's stay in Los Angeles. But when he was asked ~~back~~ in June to participate as one of 700 Eucharistic Guides for

Don't use first names in 2nd Ref. FOR ADULTS



the Papal Mass, after recovering from his initial state of shock, he thought differently and decided to accept. He had been selected as something of a representative of the adult fellowship group from his parish.

*good phrasing*  
*Griffith*  
It has been a year and a half since ~~Tom~~ left the Friary of the Franciscan Friars of the Atonement in upstate New York. In that time he has re-immersed himself in the hustle and bustle of secular Southern California, but the lessons of the preceding three years have not been lost to him.

By his own admission he is much more at peace with himself now than during those tumultuous three years, but there are still hints of the bitterness. As a teenager in Mission Viejo eager to help out at his local parish, he constantly heard well-meaning fellow-parishioners say, "Gee, you'd make a good priest." It wasn't that he wasn't thankful for their recognition, but somehow underneath it all he wouldn't accept the notion that his work was left incomplete simply because he didn't have a clerical collar.

He fought against that notion and armed himself with seminars in Religious Education and conferences on Spirituality. But in the end he knew that he wanted to minister in his church and it was apparent to him that that meant the priesthood.

Granted, that was not an overnight decision. He feigned respectability while at Cal State Fullerton by switching from



~~Drama~~ to ~~Economics~~ as his major and then graduating in three and a half years. He took a job at Security Pacific and began to envision himself in bank management.

*What was the nature of his inquiries?*

[An auto accident in March of 1983 set his mind back to the things that he had thought about before he developed banking ambitions. <sup>AFTER</sup> A month on his back, he lost his thirst for power and high ambitions and found himself in a moral dilemma when the bank offered to enroll him in <sup>its</sup> ~~their~~ management program. He knew that he had no intention <sup>of remaining</sup> ~~on sticking it out~~ in banking. So he quit.

*WHATU THAT?*

In April of 1983 he went on a healing retreat, still piecing his life together from the accident that had reminded him of his own mortality and blurred his eyesight. A Friar from the Franciscan Friars of the Atonement spoke about the common life and meaning of Christian community and Tom inched closer to making that commitment.

*CORPS*

He had considered becoming involved with the Jesuit Youth Corp (something like a Catholic Peace Corp) but by June of 1983 he asked himself, "Why go halfway?" and contacted the Franciscans in New York.

He has some mixed thoughts about the way that the Franciscans handle individuals <sup>who</sup> ~~that~~ want to join ~~up~~. The candidate is assigned a ~~Spiritual~~ Advisor and undergoes a two-year program before going to the Friary. It's something of an



Why are these in  
quotes?

reflective internship designed to make the adjustment from  
"secular life" to "religious life" smoother. It also gives the  
participants a chance to work through all of the doubts and  
confusion involved in such a big step. But for the "best laid  
plans . . . " who is saying this?

~~There was~~ very little ~~that~~ was smooth about Tom's  
transition. He had been encouraged over the first year of his  
candidacy not to think of himself as having entered the Religious  
Life, which pertains to the vows of celibacy and poverty. This  
was, no doubt, done to remove as much as possible the impulsive  
nature of such a transition and to allow the candidate an  
opportunity to replay over and over what this step means to him.

Thus, in November of 1984 Tom met and fell in love with a  
woman. Now what was he to do? The conflict of what ministry  
meant to him and what it would cost was the struggle that  
typified the next year and a half. It was this conflict that he  
was reminded of with the arrival of the Pope.

Like a subliminal equation, ministry equals priesthood and  
priesthood equals celibacy and celibacy must surely equal  
loneliness. It took him until March of 1986 to discover that the  
equation did not work for him. His experience at the Friary was  
jaded because of his earlier idealism. His romance with the  
woman ended soon after he returned to Southern California. And  
he was left with the question of why it is, in a church as



diverse and multi-cultural as the Catholic church, ~~is~~ (he only need look at the expressions of worship invoked in the course of the Pope's visit to Los Angeles) why in the midst of such diversity is there but one equation for ministry?

[That night in September, Thomas Griffith, ex-seminarian, did not get his answer, but as he escorted his 78-year-old shadow around he wondered at the fullness of it all.

*This must be a  
50-word sentence -  
Has to follow*

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